



Homeland Security: Continuous Evaluation, Strengthening of New Jersey's Preparedness

In 2005, disastrous events — both contrived and real — tested the domestic preparedness and emergency management resources of the New Jersey Attorney General's Office like nothing had tested them before.

In the end, it was an experience that demonstrated both the exceptional capabilities of New Jersey's emergency response systems and the advantages of having a unified system of law enforcement and emergency response in New Jersey.

The Attorney General's Office continued to work with other agencies of government and the private sector in developing, and putting in place, innovative strategies for protecting New Jerseyans in their homes, at school, when traveling and elsewhere.

"In a post September-11 world, there is no question that our leading priority continues to be domestic preparedness and emergency readiness," said Attorney General Harvey, who serves as Chairman of the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force. "Owing to a variety of factors — our state's high population density and diversity, our industrial base, our ports and roadways, our coastal Shore resorts and our status as a global vacation destination — New Jersey is uniquely

vulnerable, and we must be ready to deal effectively with a terrorist attack or other disaster."

The State put its preparedness capabilities to an unprecedented test in 2005 by participating in TOPOFF 3 (Top Officials 3), a rigorous, week-long preparedness exercise involving not only New Jersey, but Connecticut, Washington, D.C., the United Kingdom and Canada.

Mandated by Congress and overseen by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, TOPOFF 3 was the most comprehensive terrorism response exercise ever conducted in the United States.

Agencies within the Attorney General's Office that took part in TOPOFF3 included the State Police, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force and the Division of Criminal Justice.

The massive exercise — and an earlier, table-top "cyber exercise" to explore potential terrorism-linked breaches of information technology — also involved many other agencies of government and law enforcement. Those agencies included the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, the Office of Information Technology within the Department of Treasury, the FBI, the federal-state Regional Computer Forensics Laboratory (RCFL) in Hamilton, and a host of

Homeland security requires around the clock vigilance aimed at protecting both New Jersey's people and vital infrastructure. In photo at right, a State Police helicopter flies past a nuclear power plant. Below, a State Trooper conducts a security check at a train station in Trenton.



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Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force

Chaired by the Attorney General, the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force was created by the New Jersey Domestic Security Preparedness Act of 2001.

Previously, there had been no Cabinet-level entity dedicated to the overall planning, coordination and oversight of New Jersey's homeland security efforts. By establishing and helping to maintain a co-operative effort among government agencies at all levels — and by working closely with officials in private industry at the same time — the Task Force has fostered unity in coordinating New Jersey's homeland-security-related initiatives. The preparedness-related work of the Task Force is crucial, because New Jersey is a hub of transportation and commerce, a "corridor state" for travelers, and a popular destination for vacationers, as well as those visiting educational, cultural, and recreational sites.

other local, state and federal entities.

The fictional, but compelling, premise for TOPOFF 3 was that intelligence had been intercepted suggesting terrorists were on the verge of carrying out a biological attack in New York City. As part of the mock-disaster scenario, the terrorists realized at some point that their plan had been uncovered and, as a result, resorted to another strategy — one that involved the unleashing of a deadly plague on a college campus in northern New Jersey. The plague rapidly spread throughout the state, flooding hospitals with seriously ill patients and requiring the declaration of a State of Emergency. To deal with the anticipated need, antibiotics were requested from the national stockpile.

As part of the exercise in New Jersey, "patients" flooded emergency rooms at many major hospitals, gas-mask-wearing emergency responders performed search and rescue operations, and top officials within key public agencies were called on to make difficult decisions regarding such issues as intelligence sharing, deployment of personnel, attempts to avoid further spread of the pneumonic plague, and handling of the "ill" and the "dead."

Although the TOPOFF 3 exercise was chillingly authentic in appearance and execution, the event was well publicized in advance, and went off without creating serious public concern or panic.

In the aftermath, New Jersey's TOPOFF response effort was praised for its overall quality by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

However, the exercise did provide evidence of certain systemic and other shortcomings. This was not particularly surprising or troubling news, since identifying areas of need so New Jersey could be better poised to respond to a real terrorist attack was the primary objective of TOPOFF 3 from day one.

Specifically, it was learned that medical examiners were not available 24 hours a day, a serious liability if the state had been under genuine attack. It was also recommended that morgues be moved out of hospitals because, in a real-life scenario, plague-infected corpses would have been occupying the same facility as people being treated for the plague. Communications problems also cropped up — typically involving the length of time involved in conveying critical information — leading to the conclusion that state, federal, local and private sector entities must streamline their

communications efforts. In addition, the sprawling TOPOFF 3 demonstrated that authorities had no reliable way to seal New Jersey's borders, control traffic, or evacuate a large number of people in a compressed period of time.

Despite the problems, Attorney General Harvey deemed the exercise to be a success because it showed that many protocols and response mechanisms currently in place are effective, while clearly delineating what improvements needed to be made.

Best Security Practices Initiative with Private Industry

One of the key initiatives undertaken by the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force is development — in partnership with the private sector — of Best Security Practices to protect the industries and infrastructure that are vital to New Jersey's economy and quality of life.

The public-private collaboration that is central to developing and maintaining "best practices" is achieved largely through liaison between the Task Force and the Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IAC).

The IAC is made up of 20 industrial sector groups including, but not limited to, representatives of such industries as construction, nuclear facilities, telecommunications, transportation, health care, agriculture, schools, food, chemical manufacturing and pharmaceuticals.

The IAC sector groups focus on developing and implementing specific measures — "best practices" — to prevent, respond to and recover from potential terrorist activities. On a continuing basis, the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force works with the private sector in ensuring industry-wide compliance with these best practices.

In November 2005, the Task Force issued an order requiring implementation of "Best Practices Standards" for 165 chemical facilities that

During a domestic preparedness exercise, law enforcement officers, firefighters and other emergency personnel work together to provide an effective response under secure conditions.



*Sidney Caspersen
Director*

Office of Counter-Terrorism

Established by Executive Order in 2002, the New Jersey Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) reports to the Attorney General and complements the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force. It provides the State with a centralized agency to evaluate threats to New Jersey. The OCT's mission is described in the Executive Order that created it as "identifying, detecting and deterring terrorist activity" by focusing on intelligence-gathering and analysis, investigations, training and helping to protect critical infrastructure. OCT's work falls into four main categories: Training Initiatives, Investigation/Intelligence Initiatives, Infrastructure Protection and Information Sharing and Outreach.

- *Sidney J. Caspersen, Director*
- *Edward Curran, Deputy Director*
- *Angela Labelle, Chief of Staff*

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process extraordinarily hazardous substances. The order also requires facilities to review whether they can substitute less toxic materials in their processes and to involve workers and their collective bargaining representatives in security activities. This enforceable order will provide the public and workers greater protection from potential terrorist acts.

Public Safety Communications Officer

In 2005, Attorney General Harvey appointed the state's first Chief Public Safety Communications Officer, a position designed to improve and coordinate New Jersey's public safety communications planning, funding and "interoperability" systems. The new position represents New Jersey's commitment to ensuring communications "interoperability" — the ability of public safety agencies to communicate across jurisdictions and disciplines when needed. The Chief Public Safety Communications Officer appointee is Raymond Hayling II. On January 19, 2005, State officials demonstrated technological solutions designed to enable personnel from different agencies and first-responder disciplines to communicate with each other using their existing radio equipment. During a demonstration held at Jersey City's Emergency Operations Center, first responders from federal, state, local and other agencies engaged in successful "interoperable" radio communication. Led by Hayling, 12 different agencies were connected by tuning to assigned frequencies in their own band that are then connected through a central dispatching center. The 12 agencies represented federal, county, state and municipal governments, and each operated on different radio frequencies among the 800 MHz, UHF and VHF spectrums. Prior to the January 2005 public demonstration, the system had been tested with more than 40 agencies, including the New York City Office of Emergency Management, the FBI, the NY/NJ Port Authority and other New Jersey public safety entities.

Completion of School Security Audit Initiative

Launched in January, the Governor's School Security Initiative was a major priority of the Attorney General's Office. As a result, the State Police Infrastructure Security Unit was deployed to work with the New Jersey Department of Education and the Office of Information Technology to create a comprehensive checklist of school security measures, and to establish the program by which every school in New Jersey would be visited and audited by law enforcement and school officials.

State Police and Department of Education officials worked with local police departments to identify 45 D.A.R.E. and School Resource Officers who would train local officials to perform the security audits. In 60 training sessions, those officers trained more than 1,000 local law enforcement officers and 1,200 school officials.



AG Harvey announces the Uniform Lawyer Identification Card Initiative at a December 2005 press conference in the NJ State Bar Association Law Center Library, New Brunswick.

Uniform Lawyer Identification Card Initiative Makes Courthouse ID Screening More Efficient, Reliable

As part of its ongoing commitment to reviewing security measures at public buildings and, where appropriate, strengthening them, the Attorney General's Office, the New Jersey Bar Association and County Sheriffs in 2005 announced the development of a uniform identification card for all attorneys to display when entering courthouse facilities. The new, standardized card is expected to make verifying the identity of lawyers licensed to practice in New Jersey easier for County Sheriff's personnel. (Sheriff's officers provide courthouse security for the state Superior Courts in each of New Jersey's 21 counties.) Currently, there are 21 different lawyer identification credentials in use throughout the state. Those credentials vary depending on where they were issued, causing occasional confusion, and sometimes resulting in delays for attorneys entering courthouses.

According to Attorney General Harvey, the idea for a standardized lawyer identification card was born out of discussions with the New Jersey Bar Association, the County Sheriffs Association and the Administrative Office of the Courts. The new, uniform identification card replaces the county-bar-association-issued cards currently in use by private attorneys.

The new identification system does not give lawyers an imprimatur to bypass security procedures, Attorney General Harvey noted. Rather, it allows sheriffs' officers to establish separate lines or entrances for attorneys while maintaining a consistent level of security screening. The system is intended to provide a more efficient lawyer entry process, thus limiting security-related logjams that can delay pending cases before juries and judges.

New Jersey's 21 County Prosecutors' Offices coordinated and tracked the audits. Within six months, the Homeland Security Branch of the Division of State Police completed security audits at 3,350 schools. Information collected in the audits led to the creation of key recommendations for strengthening security measures at New Jersey public schools. (A second phase of survey activity was also to be conducted focusing on private schools throughout the state.) As part of the statewide school security initiative, State Police provided — and continue to provide — guidance and training with regard to school visitor access policies, the handling of bomb threats and suspicious packages, and creation and enhancement of contingency action plans.